

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-10

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00 NSC-07

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5589

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA PRIORITY

USMISSION UN PRIORITY

USMISSION NATO PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 ATHENS 6922

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PING, GR

SUBJECT: GREEK POLITICAL LEADERSHIP: MAVROS

REF: ATHENS 6867

1. THIS IS THE SECOND OF THREE MESSAGES ON GREEK POLITICAL LEADERS. THE FIRST : (REFTEL) DISCUSSED PRIME MINISTER KARAMANLIS. THIS MESSAGE TREATS DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN MINISTER MAVROS AND WILL BE FOLLOWED BY A THIRD ON DEFENSE MINISTER AVEROFF.

2. WHEN GEORGE MAVROS ON SEPTEMBER 20 WAS UNANIMOUSLY ELECTED LEADER OF THE CENTER UNION PARTY HE ACHIEVED A GOAL THAT HAD ELUDED HIM FOR MORE THAN TWENTY YEARS. CHARACTERISTIC-  
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ALLY, BY THE TIME HE ACHIEVED IT,THE GOAL HAD LOST MUCH OF ITS

SIGNIFICANCE AND THE POLITICAL REWARDS WERE ALREADY GOING TO OTHERS. THE CLOSET OF GEORGE MAVROS IS CLUTTERED WITH CONSOLATION PRIZES.

3. MAVROS AT 65 EMBODIES MOST OF THE STRENGTHS AND ALL OF THE WEAKNESSES OF THE VENIZELIST LIBERAL TRADITION IN GREEK POLITICS. THE PARTY HE INHERITS IS THE LATEST--AND IN ALL PROBABILITY THE LAST--INCARNATION OF THE POLITICAL MOVEMENT CREATED BY ELEFThERIOS VENIZELOS OUT OF THE ASHES OF THE ASIA MINOR DEBACLE OF 1922. LIKE ALL GREEK PARTIES EXCEPT THE COMMUNIST KKE, IT WAS CENTERED ON A SINGLE CHARISMATIC LEADER WHOSE PERSONAL FOLLOWING WAS AUGMENTED BY THOSE OF OTHER, LESS LUMINOUS POLITICAL LEADERS WHO JOINED HIM FOR REASONS OF AMBITION, PRINCIPLE OR CONVENIENCE. HAVING NO REAL STRUCTURE OR PROGRAM, THE LIBERAL PARTY TENDED SIMPLY TO REFLECT THE PREJUDICES AND ENTHUSIASMS OF ITS LEADERS, SUITABLY MODIFIED OR AMPLIFIED BY THOSE OF HIS COLLABORATORS. IN FACT, THE ONLY UNIFYING PRINCIPLE OF THE LIBERAL PARTY WAS ANTI-MONARCHISM, A FORCE STRONG ENOUGH TO SUSTAIN THE LIBERALS LONG AFTER THE ELDER VENIZELOS HAD PASSED FROM THE SCENE AND HIS SON, SOPHOCLES, HAD BECOME A MONARCHIST IN EVERYTHING BUT NAME. ALTHOUGH THE LIBERAL PARTY LIVED ON AFTER THE DEATH OF ITS FOUNDER, IT NEVER AGAIN OCCUPIED A COMMANDING POSITION IN THE GREEK POLITICAL WORLD. UNDER SOPHOCLES VENIZELOS IT BECAME ONE OF AN ENDLESS ARRAY OF SMALL PARTIES WHICH GROUPED AND REGROUPED AFTER WORLD WAR II TRYING TO IDENTIFY A CONSTITUENCY BETWEEN THE MONARCHISTS AND THE COMMUNISTS. PERHAPS IT WAS THE VERY FUTILITY OF THIS EFFORT TO FIND A COHERENT POPULAR BASE THAT ATTRACTED SO MANY INTELLECTUALS AND OTHER ROOTLESS MEMBERS OF THE ATHENIAN MIDDLE CLASS ELITE TO THE LIBERALS AND THEIR SISTER PARTIES OF THE POLITICAL CENTER AFTER THE DEATH OF ELEFThERIOS VENIZELOS IN 1936.

4. GEORGE MAVROS WAS ONE OF THESE. HE WAS AN ATHENIAN LAWYER WHO HAD STUDIED IN GERMANY. HIS FAMILY WAS LIBERAL AND WELL-TO-DO AND HE MARRIED A GREEK SHIPOWNER'S DAUGHTER FROM MARSEILLES WHOSE FORTUNE EXCEEDED HIS OWN. IN A VARIETY OF CENTER GOVERNMENTS FROM 1946 UNTIL 1965, HE HELD THE POSTS OF MINISTER OF JUSTICE, NATIONAL ECONOMY (TWICE), NATIONAL DEFENSE AND COORDINATION AND WAS GOVERNOR OF THE NATIONAL BANK. IN THE PROCESS HE ACQUIRED

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THE REPUTATION OF BEING A POLITICAL MODERATE, A POTENTIAL PRIME MINISTER AND A MAN WHO COULD NOT MAKE UP HIS MIND.

5. THE INDECISIVENESS OF MAVROS HAS EARNED HIM, ESPECIALLY AMONG NON-GREEKS, ANOTHER REPUTATION WHICH IS PROBABLY LESS DESERVED, THAT OF DEVIIOUSNESS. IT IS AT LEAST ARGUABLE THAT MAVROS' CHIEF WEAKNESS SPRINGS FROM HIS EARNEST CONSIDERATION OF ALL POINTS OF VIEW AND HIS CONSEQUENT RELUCTANCE TO CHOOSE

ANY OF THEM. HE IS THE VERY OPPOSITE OF A POLITICAL LEADER WHO IS ALWAYS LOOKING FOR THE MAIN CHANCE AND ADJUSTING HIS PRINCIPLES TO MAKE IT MORE ACCESSIBLE. MAVROS HAS MADE A CAREER OF MISSING THE MAIN CHANCE, USUALLY BECAUSE HE WAS NOT DETERMINED ENOUGH OR RUTHLESS ENOUGH TO SEIZE IT. HE IS FURTHERMORE A CONGENIAL MAN WHO IS LOYAL TO HIS FRIENDS AND, AT LEAST BY GREEK STANDARDS, NOT A GOOD HATER. HE IS INTELLIGENT BUT WITHOUT INTELLECTUAL DRIVE OR AN ANALYTICAL CUTTING EDGE. THE COMBINATION OF THESE QUALITIES PRODUCES LUSH INCONSISTENCIES IN HIS PUBLIC PRONOUNCEMENTS WHICH WERE THE DESPAIR OF HIS LIBERAL COLLEAGUES WHEN HE HELD DOMESTIC PORTFOLIOS AND ARE EQUALLY CONFOUNDING TO OTHER GOVERNMENTS NOW THAT HE IS FOREIGN MINISTER. HIS NATURAL PROCLIVITY FOR UNFINISHED SENTENCES IS MOREOVER ENCOURAGED BY THE AMBIGUITY OF HIS ROLE IN THE KARAMANLIS GOVERNMENT AND THE UNCERTAINTY OF HIS PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PRIME MINISTER. KARAMANLIS AND MAVROS ARE VERY DIFFERENT KINDS OF MEN, REPRESENTING DIFFERENT POLITICAL TRADITIONS AND ENGAGED IN A DISCREET STRUGGLE FOR POLITICAL ADVANTAGE. BY MAKING MAVROS FOREIGN MINISTER, THE PRIME MINISTER SHREWDLY GUARANTEED THAT THE VOICE OF THE CENTER UNION IN HIS COALITION WOULD GROW HOARSE TALKING ABOUT THE CYPRUS PROBLEM. IF MAVROS SOMETIMES SOUNDS LIKE A MUFFLED RENDITION OF TWO MEN HAVING AN ARGUMENT ABOUT GREEK FOREIGN POLICY IT IS BECAUSE HE WEARS TWO HATS AND SOMETIMES TALKS THROUGH BOTH OF THEM.

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 ATHENS 6922

LIMDIS

6. THAT HAVING BEEN SAID, MAVROS IS STILL A MAN OF THE WEST, A MODERATE AND A GREEK LIBERAL OF THE OLD SCHOOL WHO HAS FEW ILLUSIONS ABOUT WHAT THE SOVIET UNION CAN OFFER GREECE. IN AN ALMOST OBSOLETE SENSE HE IS A CIVILIZED MAN, WELL READ AND FOND OF MUSIC WHO SPEAKS FIVE LANGUAGES AND REMEMBERS WITH PRIDE MEETING RICHARD STRAUSS IN BERLIN. HE HAS IN THE PAST LACKED POLITICAL BUT NEVER PERSONAL COURAGE. MUCH OF THE NEW RESPECT WITH WHICH GREEK POLITICIANS REGARD HIM, AFTER YEARS OF UNFULFILLED POLITICAL PROMISE, STEMS FROM MAVROS' UNCOMPROMISING OPPOSITION TO THE GREEK MILITARY REGIME WHICH FINALLY CONSIGNED HIM TO THE PRISON ISLAND OF YIAROS, AN EXPERIENCE WHICH LASTED THREE MONTHS BUT NEARLY KILLED HIM DUE TO A HEART CONDITION AND INADEQUATE MEDICAL CARE.

7. AS LEADER AT LAST OF THE CENTER UNION, MAVROS' POLITICAL FUTURE IS AS CLOUDED AS EVER. IT PROBABLY DEPENDS ON KARAMANLIS' SUCCESS IN THE COMING ELECTIONS AS MUCH AS ON HIS OWN. THE  
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PRIME MINISTER IS AIMING AT NATIONAL LEADERSHIP, AND SHOULD HE BECOME PRESIDENT OF A GREEK PARLIAMENTARY REPUBLIC, IT IS NOT INCONCEIVABLE THAT MAVROS COULD BECOME PRIME MINISTER. IF HE DID, IT WOULD BE ONE MORE GOAL ACHIEVED TOO LATE.  
KUBISCH

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